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THE OUTLOOK OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY IN THEOLOGY.

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WHAT is the outlook of the new century in the various departments of thought to which man's attention is chiefly directed? Such a question has been asked this year by many writers. To answer it intelligently, with reference to any subject, we must consider how far and in what directions we have already traveled during the long past, so that we may know where we now stand. We must know what gains we have made before asking what further gains may be expected.

Theology—at present thought unworthy of consideration, not only by many scientific and practical men, but by some religious people—was once denominated the “queen of the sciences,” and it may claim the same title again before the century closes. By theology I mean Christian theology, for while all systematized religions which have given birth to civilizations have as their basis spiritual interpretations of the universe, it is becoming evident that the Christian interpretation is the only one which will stand, because the only one which will be accepted by the ecumenical reason.

What, then, is the result of the nineteen centuries of thought which have been applied to the spiritual ideas that culminated

in Him who was not only the revealer of the things of God, but himself the great revelation? The total result, answer some men eminent in other departments of thought to which they have devoted themselves, amounts to a minus quantity. The theologians, they say, have been the enemies of religion. The true course is to get back to Christ, simply accept his teachings, and live like him, paying no attention to the various systems of theology over which men have vainly wrangled. Such an answer has a plausible sound, but it is, in one word, irrational. Conceit is at the bottom of it; for it is based on the notion that all previous generations have been fools, and that wisdom dwells with the present generation, and only with a select few of this select generation. But great men lived before Agamemnon. A limited knowledge of history is sufficient to teach us how wise and noble were the great theologians of the past, and how indispensable their work was to the progress of humanity and the life of religion. Take, for instance, Paul, the first and the greatest of the theologians. He did not content himself with repeating like a cuckoo the words of Jesus. The pharisaic Christians, the men who persecuted him and broke up the churches he had formed, did that. He had harder work to do. He asked himself what the fact of the risen Christ meant; what his life, death, and resurrection meant for Jews, whose previous spiritual food had been the dry theology of the rabbis or crude expectations of national glory, based on illegitimate deductions from, or partial and unspiritual interpretations of, Old Testament Scripture; what those facts meant for the Jews of Alexandria, who had been influenced by the eclectic philosophy of Philo; what they meant for the Jews of the dispersion generally, who had come in closer contact with oriental or with Greek and Roman conceptions of the universe than had the Palestinian Jews; what they meant for the gentiles, to minister unto whom he had been set apart by a call of God, his own convictions of the universality of the gospel, and the consent of the other apostles; what they meant for the philosophers of Athens, the busy traders of Corinth and Ephesus, the rude country folk of Lycaonia, and all the other peoples to whom he preached, from the time he began his ministry in

Antioch, all the while knowing well that every people had deeply rooted preconceptions, which determined the character of their thought and the whole tenor of their lives; and, in a word, what the fact of Jesus meant for himself, a man who had profited in the Jews' religion above his equals and had been more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of the fathers, but who had found his early religion inadequate to satisfy his intellect or his conscience. He had then to construct a theology, based on the new convictions which had revolutionized his being and made him a new creation. He had to answer satisfactorily to his intellect the question, "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" in the light of the revelation of Jesus made to him near Damascus and subsequently in Arabia, then in the temple in Jerusalem, in Tarsus, in Antioch, and throughout those weary journeys in which the hard experiences of actual life and his own spiritual wrestlings modified, refined, and purified his conceptions, though they never once shook him loose from the foundations on which he was building his theology. In setting forth the great truths regarding Christ explicitly, he had to use the exegetical methods in which he had been trained as a student and the circle of ideas with which he was familiar; methods and ideas then in large measure common to Palestinian and Alexandrian writers, and the use of which enabled him to present his gospel along lines that made it comprehensible to the mind of his age. But for Paul's theology, the gospel would never have been anything more to the Jews than a refined form of Judaism, beautiful to a few pious souls, but destitute of power to overthrow the imposing structure of Pharisaism, and it would never have reached the Greek and Roman world at all. To belittle either such a man or his theology is simply to show our ignorance of the fundamental needs of the human spirit, ignorance of the complex conditions created by society, and ignorance of the actual world in which he moved.

It was the same with subsequent great theologians who were the master-spirits of their respective ages. Who that reads the life of Athanasius can withhold a tribute of admiration, not only for that powerful dialectic to which we owe the Nicene Creed.

and that insight into the inconsistency of Arianism which showed it to be at bottom an amalgam of Christianity and pagan polytheism, but for a character which exhibits the rarest constellation of virtues, a life serene amid every variety of fortune, and a devotion to truth which could not be shaken by all the forces of the Christianized world? Scholars are now too well aware of the significance of any great movement of thought to accept the sneer of Gibbon that the disputants of the fourth century were the mere victims of a diphthong; for, as Gibbon himself says, "the sounds and characters which approach the nearest to each other often represent the most opposite ideas." Carlyle at one time made merry over the tremendous controversies on the *homoousion* and the *homoiousion*, rolling out the Greek words in his broadest Annandale; but he subsequently acknowledged that the real question involved was whether the church would accept polytheism in any form or insist on the pure monotheism of Israel, while defining the complexity of the divine nature revealed in the New Testament. That was what the Nicene Creed aimed at, though, as in the case of Paul's theology, we must distinguish between its essence and form, that is, between the permanent and the transitory. The Nicene form is based on the conception of a substance lying beneath the properties of a thing and forming their basis, a conception which is rejected by modern philosophy. The terms "substance" and "person" have actually interchanged meanings; for, when we speak of a person, we mean the essence of a man, whereas the substance, we say, is constantly changing.

The Nicene Creed has been accepted by the church for so long a time as axiomatic theological truth that it comes to many as a shock to be told that, however well suited to the fourth century, it does not express the conception of God which is fundamental to faith. We never think of Jesus as the mysterious compound of two natures expressed by the Nicene formula, but as a person in whose life and work the gracious will and power of the invisible God was perfectly manifested and who is still united to our spirits through the indwelling of his Holy Spirit. Christ is to us, not a highly abstract product of speculative

thought, to understand which a knowledge of the Greek language and an extinct philosophy is required, but a living person who is

Nearer to us than breathing,
Closer than hands or feet,

in whom we see God and man more truly than we see either great reality elsewhere. But while the Nicene formula must share the fate of all formulas, the little deacon of Alexandria who reared it as a bulwark round the church of his day,

The royal hearted Athanase
With Paul's own mantle blest,

will be a possession forever unto humanity. As Hooker states the case, in his simple and stately English :

This was the plain condition of those times ; the whole world against Athanasius and Athanasius against it ; half a hundred years spent in doubtful trial which of the two in the end would prevail — the side which has all, or else the part which had no friend but God and death, the one a defender of his innocence, the other a finisher of all his troubles.

Athanasius against the world, and, as in the case of Jesus, against the church as well ! A council more numerous than that of Nicæa had been browbeaten and deceived into the acceptance of an Arian creed, but Athanasius triumphed in the end because truth was on his side, truth attested by the Christian consciousness, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail.

Augustine, the greatest of the Latin as Athanasius was the greatest of the Greek theologians, is even better known to the church, because he dared to lay bare all the secrets of his heart and life, with the result that it is impossible for anyone who reads his *Confessions* not to be attracted to a personality so passionate, profound, and all-embracing of the spiritual light and heat of his time. His *Confessions* have been compared with those of Rousseau, probably because both men gave the same name to their autobiographies. But the two works are alike only in the one point of absolute truthfulness. Rousseau is the natural man, who to his life's end knows no other force than that of nature and no other center but self, and who is quite sure that—mean, vain, and beastly as he is and has been—no one else is or can be better. When the last trumpet sounds, he is

ready to present himself, book in hand, before the sovereign Judge, and, calling on all men to listen to his confessions, he will challenge anyone to say, "I was better than that man there." For him there is no such thing as divine grace and no Savior from sin; no need of forgiveness and no sense of shame. Augustine, while he sees his sins and the sinfulness of his nature in the light of God, which burns into the secrets of the heart "ten thousand times brighter than the sun," repents like David with bitter tears, cries like the psalmists for forgiveness, finds it and thanks God for the Christ who has given to him as to Paul victory over sin, the clean heart, the free spirit, and abounding peace. He writes to the count Darius of his book: "See what I was in myself and by myself. I had destroyed myself, but he who made me remade me." He was a new creation. In the innermost depth of his being he found freedom and grace to be the same; and so he constantly prayed the prayer which excited the ridicule of the Pelagians, but which is understood by everyone who has found God in Christ: "Da quod jubes et jube quod vis." He was the theologian needed to formulate for the church its doctrines regarding sin and grace, divine sovereignty and human freedom, just as Athanasius had formulated the doctrines regarding the Godhead and the twofold nature of Christ. The church had been rent by Manichæism, and its true faith had to be made explicit before it received into its fold the almost ungovernable hordes of barbarians which, during the long period of pupilage which followed, it—with the imperial instinct of old Rome—wisely disciplined and at length transformed into the law-governed nations of Christendom. In the *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso* of Dante we see even more clearly than in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, who is generally regarded as the theologian of mediævalism, the marvelous fabric of dogma which the church built up, based mainly on the writings of Augustine. Though the outer garb with which Augustine and his successors clothed the truth will pass away, the truth will remain.

No accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world has ever lost.

The treasure is in earthen bodies, in perishable wine-skins, but it is not lost when the vessel or wine-skin becomes outworn. The spirit weaves for itself more and more appropriate vessels or vestments. A garb or an earthen vessel which has done good service for centuries should be laid aside, when the time comes for putting it on the shelf of a museum, tenderly and even reverently. But that is not weak man's method. Humanity progresses, not as nature does, calmly, silently, slowly, irresistibly; but violently, passionately, through storm and stress, through blood and iron and earth-shaking conflicts, which are the birth-pangs of a wider day. Such were the birth-pangs of Europe, from the martyrdoms of Wycliffe, John Huss, Jerome of Prague, the Bohemian wars, and the sufferings of a countless host in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, down to the peace of Westphalia and the triumph of British Puritanism in the seventeenth century. At the diet of Worms, Luther, the theologian who should be most honored by all who are true to the modern spirit, the spirit which claims independent thinking, free examination, searching criticism, as the birthright of philosophy and science, and who would be honored by us if we but knew how much we are in his debt, proclaimed that the hour of a new epoch had struck, and that its motto was the Word of God interpreted by the devout reason. At the Leipzig disputations he declared:

I believe that I am a Christian theologian and that I live in the realm of truth; therefore will I be free and will give myself into the hands of no authority, be it that of a council or the emperor or the universities, or the pope, in order that I may confess with confidence all that I discern to be the truth.

With that word he broke the spell under which all Europe lay groaning for deliverance, a spell which still binds the great majority of men, the weaklings who dare not stand alone with God, because they do not believe that the Eternal Spirit is willing to speak directly to their spirits, because their souls have never been united to him in that act of mutual, ineffable love and trust which Luther formulated into his doctrine of justification by faith. The modern world stands on Luther's broad shoulders. Pfeiderer truly says, "We are all ruled by his mighty spirit, and the more fully so the less we are bound by his letter;"

and he confirms this judgment by a remarkable testimony from Goethe, "a judge as competent as he was unbiased."¹

The Reformation was so great a movement of the human spirit that many theologians in many lands were needed to conserve it against hostile forces. The greatest of these was Calvin, who saved the principles of the Reformation from license by his great system of doctrine. Probably the finest body of systematized theology produced by the school was the Westminster Confession, and the theologian who expressed the Puritan doctrine in its most beautiful form and led captive the popular imagination was John Bunyan. Calvin's *Institutes*, the Westminster Confession, and the works of Owen and Turretin are now seldom read, but new editions of the *Pilgrim's Progress* are continually called for.

How great were the theologians of the church! How commanding their personalities! Each did the work of his day, discerning the signs of the times and the ever-enlarging purpose of God, and being true to the revelations made to his spirit.

To understand how our thoughts have widened since the seventeenth century, we need only look at the proof-texts appended to the doctrines formulated in the Westminster Confession. To the great men assembled in the Jerusalem chamber the Bible was a book, and not a literature; and all its parts were on the same plane and of equal authority. No wonder that they failed to grasp much of its teaching or to appreciate its rich content of wealth for the enrichment of life. They were saved from radical misunderstanding, because they had Luther's spirit and had learned his gospel. Jesus Christ was their Savior. Salvation was obtained, not by works or any human instrumentality, but through grace, by the immediate surrender of the soul to God. Their faces were turned to the light, and the light has been increasing to the perfect day, though, as the sun gains added power, men with weak eyes are always dazzled, lament that darkness is covering the land, and cry out that the harbingers of new light should be killed, banished, imprisoned, or at least be put out of the church!

¹ *Evolution and Theology*, p. 78.

It takes time to weave new principles into the warp and woof of humanity. The Reformation has been doing its work all through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, along the multitudinous lines in which the free spirit seeks to realize itself; in physical, chemical, and biological science; in speculation, history, and criticism; in politics, economics, and ethics; in comparative religion, in art, and in every department in which man seeks for the true, the good, or the beautiful. Much has been done. The materials have been gathered for a far wider theological synthesis than any that has ever yet been attempted—a synthesis in which no spiritual treasure which has been garnered by the toil of previous generations will be lost, but in which a wider and grander view of the universe and the purpose of God will be given to the delighted vision of the lovers of truth.

In what directions must progress be made before we can expect anything like a complete synthesis which will include and transcend the old theology? The Reformation has not yet done its work either in Europe or America. It was arrested by violent opposition from without and a consequent reaction from within, needed probably to conserve the advance which had been made. But the opposing forces seem to be now well-nigh exhausted, and the churches of the Reformation, if only they have the courage of faith which has too often been lacking, are at length free to carry out the principles of the Reformation and to regenerate society with the spiritual force which always flows from a new appreciation of Christ and the Bible. This includes a franker recognition and a wider interpretation than were possible in the sixteenth or seventeenth century of the rights of the Word of God and the rights of the human spirit.

By the Word of God we mean more than the Bible, and the Bible means infinitely more than, or rather something quite different from, an arsenal which supplies arms and ammunition for the defense of a dogmatic or ecclesiastical position—that position being thus regarded as primary and the Bible as of quite secondary importance. The Bible itself, and not any confession or text-book of systematic divinity, must be the center of theological education. And the Bible is essentially

literature, rather than a statute book: the literature of the people who have been rightly called "the people of revelation," because through them the religion which is commensurate with the highest civilization, and which alone has the promise of permanency, has been made known to the world. That literature must be studied with the same scientific freedom from preconceptions and with the same seriousness as Greek, Roman, French, German, Italian, or English literature is now studied. In no other way can its priceless treasures become the inheritance of the human spirit and enter into our life-blood. Unless studied as literature—and it can be so studied only in an atmosphere of scientific freedom—it will be neglected as the source of religious knowledge or the guide of life; and such neglect is fatal to us, because, unlike Romanists, we have no external and authoritative source and guide on which to fall back. We are thus left without either source or guide. Literary and historical criticism is, therefore, the indispensable condition of a living Protestantism, as well as the surest sign of faith. Such criticism is sometimes called destructive, and rejected without examination as the work of unbelievers. It is destructive only of the work of the scribes, who—prizing the remains of their national literature as the only glory left to Israel—combined, codified, and edited them and any new work which appealed to the theocratic consciousness of the people, with pious zeal, but with an utter lack of historical sense or literary judgment quite unavoidable, because characteristic of the East and of the age in which they did their work. We are too much indebted to them for what they preserved for succeeding ages ever to think of them save as benefactors; but to remain in bondage to them when the labors of three or four generations of scholars have revealed their methods, as the treatment of our Lord by their successors revealed their spiritual inadequacy, is discreditable to the children of light. Literary, historical, and archæological criticism is therefore essentially constructive, and a necessary development of the work of the reformers who were the critics of their age. It is not possible to isolate the Bible from the process of fearless, reverential criticism, which for more than a

century has been applied to the history, the literature, and the bibles of all other peoples. Niebuhr first supplied the key to unlock the treasures of history shrouded under beautiful forms of myth, legend, and fable, or covered by ruins, where the passer-by saw only subjects for stale moralizings. He rewrote ancient history and gave it a larger interpretation. A host of German, French, Dutch, Swiss, and British investigators and critics have entered into and followed up his labors, with the result that nothing has been lost, but much gained. A true perspective of ancient history has been secured, and this with such benefit to Christianity, which is emphatically a historical religion, that Delitzsch has pronounced the historical spirit to be the special *charisma* which God has given to the modern church. Sir William Jones first revealed to the British people the literature of India; and since his day countless scholars have been at work investigating the origin and development of the religions of the world. Everyone now sees that the views of them taken by our forefathers were inadequate and unjust; often ludicrously so; and, admittedly, we can now establish the superiority of any religion only after a comparative estimate of it with others which have held the field side by side with it for centuries, and subjecting all alike to tests and canons of universal validity. Only in this way will full justice be done to the Bible. Any other way means lack of faith in the Bible, and in Him to whom it points.

Again, the rights of the human spirit are not fully met when the freedom of the individual is asserted. The doctrine of justification by faith as "*the* article of a standing or falling church" presupposes a general development of the individual which did exist in northern Europe after its long pupilage in the school of the church during the Middle Ages, but which existed nowhere else. It is still the prevailing spirit in few countries, outside of those in which the Teutonic, Scandinavian, and English-speaking races have found a home. Luther's successful stand for freedom does, indeed, mark an epoch in the history of humanity, the significance of which will never be lost. The individualism foreshadowed by Jeremiah's new covenant,

and established by Jesus as the rock upon which he would build his church, can never be superseded, now that it has been established as the basis of modern society. It is the birthright of the fully developed spiritual man. But we have learned that the truth of individualism must be supplemented by the opposite truth, that the individual is himself the result of long racial processes from which it is unwise to attempt to shake him suddenly free. It follows that doctrines suited to Teutonic and kindred peoples may be quite unsuited to the negroes of Africa, or to the Hindoo and Mongol, races which have been trained under totally different social conditions, customs, and laws. Earnest missionaries have commenced their labors with the conviction that Hottentots could be summarily converted into entirely new products, and that the natives of the South Sea Islands needed only the gospel to put them on a level with the most advanced races. The most open-minded missionaries have been disillusioned, after repeated heart-breaking disappointments, but it is doubtful if the churches have yet been even partially disillusioned. The discipline of Israel under the law for centuries, until the fulness of the time had come, is a lesson that has apparently been thrown away on Christendom. The problem of "saving" men still seems to the ordinary Christian exceedingly simple. Did not Paul say to the Philippian jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," and does it not follow that it is enough to preach to all men, "Only believe"? "The gospel has not lost its power," is the reply he probably gives to those who suggest that human nature is complex, and that the condition of every people and every class in society is determined by a previous history, every factor in which must be sympathetically understood, if any permanent advance is to be made.

A many-sided process, extending over centuries, is, therefore, required to save a people, to the extent of bringing them up even to the low level on which we ourselves stand. To carry this out successfully, all the varied forces of Christian civilization must be recognized as essentially religious. The church must co-operate with these, sympathetically and intelligently. For this, patience is needed, but "he that believeth will not

make haste." He that has eyes to see will not despair. For instance, the caste system of India, originally a beneficent social institution, though now an intolerable burden, is being sapped and mined by steam and electricity, by European science and civilization, by the spirit with which a noble army of British officials administers the laws, and by the diffusion of literature essentially Christian, more certainly and on a far larger scale than by direct missionary influences. The destruction of the old is, however, always a comparatively small matter. The more important question remains: "What is to take its place?" Are we simply destroying the old, or are we providing for the creation of a new body? Are we preparing the way for the coming in power of the spirit of Christ, which fashions within every society a new body of conceptions and social usages adequate to the expansion of the organism? Under the operation of the *pax britannica*, silent processes are going on in India, which will issue in a new heaven and a new earth in which its teeming millions will experience a new life. China is in a different stage of evolution, and so is the Mohammedan world. The prospects in neither of these two worlds are at all cheering, but those who have faith in the word of God and in the spirit of man, when allowed to operate in an atmosphere of freedom, never despair.

Much, then, remains to be done before a new theology, worthy of the twentieth century, can be constructed. That theology will need to be what all the other systems professed, but never could be—the conclusions of the ecumenical reason and conscience, enlightened by the Holy Spirit "which lighteth every man who cometh into the world." The present work of investigation and criticism must go on, until everything which can be shaken is taken out of the way or put in its proper place, and until firm common ground, on which all can stand securely, has been reached. As to the character of this common ground, or the essence of Christianity, we shall be guided by the Christian consciousness of nineteen centuries, common to all the churches, and which has proved their saving salt against the various forms of error which have blended with their truth: namely, that Jesus, the founder of the perfect spiritual religion, is the Christ

promised in the Old Testament, and that he belongs to a higher order of being than the merely human and is, in a unique sense, one with God the Father. The philosophy of evolution, which now holds the field, is unwilling to accept such a view of Jesus. We may admit with it that the ideas which we owe to him would survive, even if he were regarded as merely the son of earthly parents, a teacher sent from God, who had come to the world in the regular line of natural descent. In such a case we should still have the Christ of poetry and art, and the Christ of speculation. Whether we should have the Christ of the church and the living Christ, the ever-present Savior of sinful men, is another question. The Christian consciousness—and it should be as supreme after nineteen centuries of almost world-wide testimony as the artistic consciousness is within its realm—affirms that we should not. We are oppressed with a sense of personal guilt, and must have forgiveness if we are to become new creatures. Conscience demands forgiveness, justification, and reconciliation. Man cannot give authoritatively any one of the three. The awakened conscience declares that, if Christ be not risen, we are yet in our sins; but, seeing that he is risen, we, too, rise with him into newness of life and reign with him now and forever. The philosophy of evolution cannot bear to be questioned, but it has yet to ascertain its real content. It is flushed with victories and unwilling to acknowledge that its solvents may not be applied to all the mysteries with which we are surrounded. When it becomes somewhat older and more sober, then, through that fidelity to facts from which it has arisen, it will become convinced that Jesus cannot be interpreted on the supposition that he was merely man, and it will have no more difficulty in accepting the apostolic interpretation of his person than it now has in admitting the distinction between the inorganic and the organic, between the plant and the animal, and between the animal and man. In such a question as this the testimony of Christ's own consciousness must be decisive; and if it be said that we cannot know with undoubted clearness what that testimony was, we have, at any rate, the testimony of the Christian consciousness, from the days of the apostles down to the present. As regards the ideas and

facts on which that has always rested, they cannot yield to theory. Theory must always yield to the facts.

What may be expected to flow from this Christo-centric position, when it is universally recognized by the church?

First, such an increase of spiritual unity as shall lead to organic union. Whether a metaphysic of the person of Christ shall continue to be regarded as essential, or whether the future church shall be content with the summary of facts recorded in the so-called Apostles' Creed, it would be premature to say; but manifestly the Quadrilateral formulated by the Lambeth Convocation of Bishops as a basis of church union will have to be set aside. Three of its articles have, indeed, been informally accepted, almost without thought or question, though the non-Episcopal churches have hesitated about the fourth. But why should the creeds of Nicæa, Ephesus, Chalcedon, and Constantinople be put on the same level with the spiritual forces from which they originated? Are not those creeds simply results of the spiritual forces which originated from the great fact of the person of Christ? And why should the creeds of the fourth and fifth centuries be accepted and all subsequent creeds and confessions be rejected? The truth is that we know little of the early centuries and of the un-Christian spirit in which the assembled bishops often acted. If we knew more, we should put the Westminster Assembly far above even the Nicene Council.

Secondly, that the great churches of the Reformation will, as preliminary to organic union, rewrite their confessions, adapt them to our own time, and find out the extent of the common ground on which Christians now stand. What is required in this work is not the elimination of phrases and chapters, or the addition of supplementary articles and understandings, but testimonies of the church's faith, written from the new point of view which we all occupy. The organizing principle of the twentieth-century confession will be, not the sovereignty, but the fatherhood of God; not his secret purpose, but his revealed will, that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. This central revelation of God will dominate the view taken of man's nature, place, and duty. It

will be recognized that love is mightier than, because inclusive of, faith; that the note of every true church must be hope; and that every work by which man is benefited is Christian work. Theologians filled with such a spirit will not find it any more difficult to formulate a harmonious system of religious truth than the task seemed to the reformers. Calvin was but a youth when he wrote his famous *Institutio Christianae Religionis*. Luther and Melancthon drew up articles of their faith in new forms as often as they were needed during the varying struggles of friendly and opposing forces. Knox and his coadjutors, when called on by the Parliament of Scotland to submit to them a statement of the reformed faith, did not take many days to draw up a confession so worthy of the movement they represented that Edward Irving considered it superior to that which the Westminster Assembly in the century following took years to compile. These men were not hampered by the letter, for they were filled with the spirit. They readily changed their own phrases as light grew with the progress of events; and they understood that their words were simply their testimonies, and not tests by which future generations were to be kept in spiritual bondage. When a church is able to utter its faith in the language for its own day, it gives proof that it is a living church, awake to the signs of the times; that it is progressive as well as conservative; and that it is able to face dangers, to expand with the growth of the free spirit, and to adjust itself to the larger environment in which men are now living.